

O 070622Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY MANAMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5927
INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/HQ USCNTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHBVAKS/COMUSNAVCET PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MANAMA 001890

SIPDIS

FOR R, NEA

EO. 12958: DECL: 11/02/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [PGO](#) [OEXC](#) [KMPI](#) [BA](#) [POL](#) [REFORM](#)
OFFICIALS
SUBJECT: CROWN PRINCE, U/S HUGHES DISCUSS IMPORTANCE OF
OUTREACH IN COMBATING EXTREMISM

MANAMA 00001890 001.6 OF 003

Classified By: Ambassador William T. Monroe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Crown Prince Salman told Under Secretary of State Hughes November 1 that Bahrain stands ready to enhance the bilateral relationship and will support any initiative that furthers both countries' national interests. The phenomenon of "death cult" extremists presents a challenge to moderates in the region, who have to develop strategies to combat extremists' access to manpower and financing. The CP supports and promotes exchange programs, saying it is important to keep the networks of young people active and healthy. Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa invited American experts to participate in the work of a Bahraini committee focusing on education and vocational training reform. Noting the President's passionate belief in political participation, U/S Hughes emphasized the value the USG places on the work of the National Democratic Institute project in Bahrain. The CP said there was push-back in Bahrain to the King's political reform program and some danger of sectarian tensions spilling over from Iraq. He spoke of the importance of building democratic institutions and not just holding elections. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Under Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes met with Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa November 1 and discussed the U.S.-Bahrain bilateral relationship, combating Islamic extremism, exchange and education programs, the freedom agenda, the Palestinian situation, and Iraq, among other issues. Accompanying the Crown Prince were Deputy Prime Minister Shaikh Mohammed bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, MFA Assistant Under Secretary for Coordination and Follow Up Shaikh Abdul Aziz bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, and CP Chief of Staff Shaikh Khalifa bin Daj Al Khalifa. Participating on the U.S. side were the Ambassador, Director of the Arabic Public Diplomacy Hub Michael Pelletier, Director of Private Sector Outreach Barbara Goergen, Senior Advisor Gamal Helal, and Pol/Econ Chief (notetaker).

Ready to Develop and Deepen Relationship

¶3. (C) Shaikh Salman told U/S Hughes that Bahrain values tremendously its relationship with the United States and "we stand ready to develop and deepen the relationship." Bahrain will support any initiative that furthers both our national interests. Shaikh Mohammed added that the Bush administration is closer to Bahrain than any other administration. Bahrain is doing its part in many ways,

including joining the Proliferation Security Initiative and participating in PSI exercise Leading Edge. He indicated that Bahrain is now formally part of the coalition that patrols the Arabian Gulf and Sea in combined naval task forces. The Crown Prince said that although Bahrain faces hard challenges in the future, it wants to achieve President Bush's vision of political empowerment. U/S Hughes stated that the United States recognizes Bahrain as an important ally and friend.

Combating the Extremist "Death Cult"

14. (C) The Crown Prince stated that the Arab world is "in a position we don't want to be in." The ideological path took a wrong turn and now young people are encouraged by a "cult" to commit suicide. They are cut off from their friends and family and turn to extremism. They come from all strata of family, social, and financial standing. The issue facing moderates is how to address this challenge. Shaikh Salman spoke about what he refers to the role of the three M's" in combating extremism: manpower, money, and movement. On manpower, the meta-symbol used by the extremist cult to suck people in is the afterlife. Moderates need to develop ways to combat this attraction. Money refers to the financing available to extremists, and there need to be better ways to track and shut down the flow of funds to them. On movement, the CP believes there must be better intelligence gathering and coordination. No country exists in isolation, and friendly states should share information they have obtained.

MANAMA 00001890 002 OF 003

15. (C) U/S Hughes stated that her mission is to reach out, build bridges, and increase communication and understanding. A big part of this mission is the ideological battle. We seek to create a wedge between extremists and moderates, who want to live in peace, to isolate the fanatics and make it clear to all that their ideology is a death cult. The Crown Prince agreed and noted that he perceives a difference between the death cultists and other extremists. The death cult, represented by Al Qaida, wants to kill people. Other extremists, represented by Hamas and Hizballah, want to promote their agenda through grassroots community and social services and politics. They all hijack the spirit of moderation and claim to represent the mainstream.

Keeping People-to-People Networks Healthy

16. (C) The Crown Prince continued that the U.S. should continue to understand that the actions of a few should not tarnish an entire religion. He said he encourages Bahrainis to get to know U.S. culture through business, education, and other exchange programs. He noted that he sponsors young people to study in the U.S. through the Crown Prince Scholarship Program. Young people create networks, and it is important to keep these networks active and healthy. Deputy PM Shaikh Mohammed agreed, saying that improved education curriculums will benefit generations. He indicated that Bahrain has formed a committee to reform education and vocational training programs, and he invited American experts to participate in the committee's work. Shaikh Salman explained that one of the main areas of focus in education reform is teacher training. He asked if Bahraini teachers could gain access to training programs in the U.S. or if American teachers could come to Bahrain on a temporary basis to instruct their Bahraini counterparts in best practices. U/S Hughes agreed to discuss this proposal with Secretary of Education Spellings, terming it a good idea.

17. (C) The Crown Prince said that Arab youth are greatly influenced by American pop culture and products - music, theater, arts, films, and television. It would be beneficial

if there were sympathetic Arab characters in American media products that could serve as role models and demonstrate that the U.S. treats Arabs fairly.

Youth Exchanges

¶18. (C) U/S Hughes noted that the youngest participants in U.S. exchange programs are in high school and there is concern that by this age, they could already have negative views of the United States. She indicated that the U.S. is considering organizing summer camps in the region for those below high school age to promote English language learning, spread information about the role of governments and civil society, and encourage friendships between Arabs and Americans. Shaikh Salman approved of this idea, in particular exposing youth to American culture at a younger age, on the condition that there is linkage between these programs and those for older youth so they can receive continuous exposure to American ideas. He also emphasized that U.S. policymakers and members of Congress should visit the area more often. There is doubt about U.S. policy in the region, he said, and visiting senior officials and politicians can help explain the American perspective.

¶19. (C) Shaikh Salman said the U.S.-Bahrain free trade agreement is "a very big deal." The United States needs to reward countries that are moving towards more open economies. U.S. support for countries involved in economic reform is crucial. The region needs more role models of this kind.

Domestic Push-Back to King's Political Reforms

¶10. (C) U/S Hughes stressed that the President passionately believes there needs to be more space for political participation in the region. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) project is a big symbol for what is happening in Bahrain. Americans see the reforms, but NDI's forced departure has damaged Bahrain's reputation, and its continued absence from Bahrain will remain a concern to the U.S. Government. The Crown Prince said that he has his personal

MANAMA 00001890 003 OF 003

views of the NDI scenario and NDI's presumed partner the Bahrain Institute for Political Development (Comment: Implying he was not happy about how things had played out), but indicated there has been push-back to the King's political reform program. There are those who are against reform and there is a "serious danger of real confrontation." There is concern that sectarian tensions in Iraq could spill over into Bahrain. The GOB wants to work with NDI but not as the single source of expertise.

¶11. (C) Shaikh Mohammed agreed, saying that if there was too much pressure, the democracy project in Bahrain could fail. He said Bahrain had moved quite a bit on democracy and the government continued to be engaged in the process of educating the people. They need to feel that freedom and democracy come from within, not outside. "I assure you we will make democracy a success," he said. In response to U/S Hughes' question, Shaikh Mohammed said "perhaps" NDI could return to Bahrain after the elections.

Developing Political Institutions

¶12. (C) The Crown Prince stated that when he had last met with Secretary Rice (in March 2006), he had stressed that when Bahrain talks about democratic reform, it looks beyond just holding elections to developing institutions. Democracy is no guarantee of liberty, but pluralism allows for respect for different views. Making people feel that they are a part

of the process is important. Issues must be addressed in their own way in each country. People see what is happening in Iraq, Iran, and the Palestinian territories and there is push-back on democracy. No one wants their country torn apart by sectarianism, he said.

Forward Leaning Posture with President Abbas

¶13. (C) Returning to a usual refrain, the Crown Prince said that the U.S. is widely viewed in the Arab world as being biased in the Israel-Palestinian issue. Whatever the U.S. could do to change this perception would be helpful, in particular by supporting President Abbas. The U.S. has been too hands off; it should now adopt a more forward leaning posture. The more extreme elements, especially suicide bombers, drove U.S. policy away from engagement.

¶14. (C) The Crown Prince said that Bahrain is now telling Abbas that he needs to get Hamas out of the government. Abbas should have the ability to run the process of dealing with Israel without the influence of Hamas. U.S. engagement is "the number one issue." If the moderates do not solve the problem now, he said, then in ten years we will be dealing with people holding guns. U/S Hughes stated that the President and Secretary want to see genuine progress toward a Palestinian state. The President had emphasized this in his address to the UN General Assembly. The CP said the President's comments had been very well received. The Palestinians had dropped the ball by not taking the next step. Abbas now needs to know that he will be supported by the U.S. if he dissolves the Palestinian government.

Reconciliation in Iraq

¶15. (C) In response to U/S Hughes' question, the Crown Prince said that Iraqi PM Maliki needs to activate a reconciliation program. In his view, Iraq really needs a military government at this time, "but it's too late for that." Maliki is facing challenges from Moqtada Al Sadr and Iran. The CP recalled that in a meeting one year ago, Iranian President Ahmadi-Nejad had remarked that it was in Iran's national interest that the Iraqi government be weak, and that the U.S. be tied up in Iraq.

¶16. (U) U/S Hughes cleared this cable.

Visit Embassy Manama's Classified Website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/manama/>

MONROE